

GULF OF MEXICO (GULF) AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
AMENDMENT 18 TO THE COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN
ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

OCTOBER 2011

What are the proposed changes to management in Amendment 18?

- Four species would be removed from federal management: cero, little tunny, dolphin, and bluefish (Gulf of Mexico only).
- Separate migratory groups, Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic, would be established for cobia. For Atlantic group cobia, allocations between commercial and recreational sectors would be set.
- Annual catch limits and annual catch targets would be established.
- Accountability measures would be established.
- The framework procedure (which allows for more timely implementation of routine regulatory changes) would be updated.

Why are management changes needed?

- Annual catch limits and accountability measures are required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.
 - Annual catch limits are the highest level of landings that is acceptable to maintain the stock.
 - Annual catch targets are acceptable levels of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty, are optional.
 - Accountability measures help keep landings within the catch limits or catch targets, or make adjustments if those levels are exceeded.
- For more information, please see the [General Annual Catch Limit Frequently Asked Questions page](#).

Which species will have catch limits and accountability measures?

- King mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia are required to have catch limits and accountability measures by the end of 2011.
- King and Spanish mackerel are separated into Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups; cobia would also be separated into similar groups. Each group would have separate catch limits.

Why are species being recommended for removal from the fishery management plan?

- In the process of developing new federal regulations, NOAA Fisheries Service, and the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) reviewed all of their fishery management plans to determine which species are still in need of federal management.
- Four species (cero, little tunny, dolphin, and bluefish (Gulf only)) were originally included in the management plan “for data collection purposes”, but data collection on any species can be required of fishermen and dealers that hold federal permits, regardless of the presence of that species in a fishery management plan.
- No management actions have ever been needed for these species.

- The South Atlantic has a separate management plan for dolphin and wahoo; an amendment to that management plan will set catch limits for those species. Bluefish in the Atlantic are managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council.
- If landings or effort changed for any of these species and the Councils determined management at the federal level was needed, these species could be added back into the management plan at a later date.

What are the proposed accountability measures?

- The proposed accountability measures would be implemented if the catch limit or catch target is reached for each species group in the table below.
 - In-season actions would be implemented during the same season the catch limit or catch target is reached or projected to be reached.
 - Post-season actions would be implemented in the following season if the catch limit or catch target is exceeded.

Species/Group	Commercial In-season		Recreational In-season	Commercial Post-season	Recreational Post-Season
King Mackerel					
Gulf	Closure by zone, sub-zone and gear if sector or gear quota is reached*		Revert the bag limit to zero if recreational allocation is reached	None	None
Atlantic	Closure if commercial quota is reached		None	None	Reduce the bag limit in the following year if stock catch limit is reached
Spanish Mackerel					
Gulf	Both sectors close if the stock catch limit is reached			None	
Atlantic	Closure if commercial quota is reached*		None	None	Reduce the bag limit in the following year if stock catch limit is reached
Cobia					
Gulf	Both sectors close if the stock catch target is reached		None		
Atlantic	Closure if commercial quota is reached	None	None	Reduce the length of the fishing season in the following year if stock catch limit is reached	

*In some zones, trip limit reductions also take place as outlined in current regulations.

Will payback of any overages be required?

- For Atlantic groups, if the stock is overfished (population abundance is too low) and the catch limit is exceeded, payback of the overage would be required the following year.
- At this time, none of these stocks are overfished, so payback would not be implemented.

What would the framework procedure do?

- The framework procedure provides a mechanism for timely implementation of routine actions and a guideline for implementing such actions in a consistent manner.
- The preferred procedure would increase the flexibility of the Councils and NOAA Fisheries Service by identifying measures that could be changed under the procedure, and would clarify the appropriate process needed for each type of change.

How can I comment on Amendment 18 and its proposed rule?

- You may submit comments by any of the following methods:
 - To submit comments through the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov, click on "submit a comment", then enter "NOAA-NMFS-2011-0202" in the keyword search and click on "search". To view posted comments during the comment period, enter "NOAA-NMFS-2011-0202" in the keyword search and click on "search". You may submit attachments to electronic comments in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.
 - Mail: Susan Gerhart, NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
- Comments on the amendment must be received no later than November 28, 2011, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service.
- Comments received by November 28, 2011, whether specifically directed to the amendment or the proposed rule, will be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service in its decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment. Comments received after that date will not be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service in this decision.
- All comments received by NOAA Fisheries Service on the amendment or the proposed rule during their respective comment periods will be addressed in the final rule.